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LETTER DATED 27 OCTOBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the statement on a comprehensive approach to Kosovo issued on 27 October 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ernst SUCHARIPA
Permanent Representative
of Austria to the United Nations

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement on a comprehensive approach to Kosovo issued on 27 October 1998 by the European Union

The European Union remains gravely concerned at the situation in Kosovo, in particular regarding the plight of the civilian population, refugees and displaced persons. Tens of thousands of people may still be without permanent shelter in Kosovo as winter approaches. The European Union will continue to engage substantial resources towards alleviating this plight.

The European Union fully supports the agreements signed in Belgrade on 16 October 1998 between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and on 15 October 1998 between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and NATO through negotiations mandated by the Contact Group on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, as an important step towards a political solution to the Kosovo crisis. It welcomed Security Council resolution 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998, conferring the authority of the United Nations to the demand for full and immediate compliance by all parties concerned with these agreements, the unilateral commitments and Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998). The focus is now on full and immediate compliance, by all parties concerned.

Although some progress has been made, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is still not respecting the provisions of Security Council resolution 1199 (1998), in particular with regard to the withdrawal of security forces to their positions prior to March 1998. The European Union calls on all parties, and in particular on President Milosevic, to live up to their obligations and commitments, to refrain from further acts of violence in the region and to engage in immediate political negotiations. It welcomes the statement of Ibrahim Rugova on 22 October in response to the efforts of the European Union Special Envoy, Ambassador Petritsch, calling on the armed Kosovo Albanian groups to refrain from action which could be used as a provocation for new attacks by Serb/Yugoslav security forces, and expressing his support for the Milosevic-Holbrooke agreement. The need remains for pressure to be maintained to ensure compliance and to prevent a return to violence and repression. In this respect the European Union will take the necessary steps to enhance the effective implementation of its own sanctions.

The European Union pledges its full support for OSCE and for the Kosovo Verification Mission, to which member States will contribute very substantially in personnel and resources. It commends the efforts of Poland, as chair-in-office of OSCE, and Norway in this respect. Clear and effective lines of responsibility within the Kosovo Verification Mission are essential. The substantial overall European contribution to the Mission should be fully reflected in the positions of responsibility to be filled by European Union nationals. The Presidency has conveyed this point to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. Financial provisions should be based on the principle of equitable burden-sharing and on established OSCE procedures.

The European Union welcomes the plans of the European Community Monitoring Group to considerably and quickly increase its presence in Kosovo in order to facilitate the early start of the Kosovo Verification Mission. The European Community Monitoring Group should maintain a liaison presence in Kosovo Verification Mission headquarters in Pristina for reporting purposes.

The effectiveness and security of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission are paramount concerns. The European Union expects President Milosevic and those responsible in the Kosovo Albanian community to ensure the safety of the verifiers and international humanitarian personnel. The European Union supports the provision of a rapid reaction capability.

The European Union also supports the NATO air verification mission, and would welcome the participation of the Russian Federation and other non-NATO countries. Good coordination between air and ground verification is essential in verifying compliance.

It is urgent for the parties to start real negotiations on the future status of Kosovo. President Milosevic must stand by his unilateral statement, which is a constituent element of his overall agreement with Ambassador Holbrooke. The Kosovo Albanian leadership must engage in serious dialogue without preconditions, and with the widest possible representation in its negotiating team. The European Union as a major factor in the stability of the Balkans will continue its efforts to restore peace in Kosovo. As part of these efforts, the European Union will remain actively involved in supporting the negotiating process, notably through the activity of the European Union Special Envoy, Ambassador Petritsch, on the basis of the United States proposal as amended and endorsed by the Contact Group and the European Union.

The European Union is already contributing very substantially in Kosovo, and is prepared to continue contributing, not least in the framework of the Kosovo Verification Mission. The Commission is already urgently analysing all possibilities in the different fields of assistance to Kosovo. Member States will provide substantial assistance directly and through United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. European Union member States are ready, in accordance with European Union priorities, to make available additional financial resources to support the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and the European Community and members States will consider this for humanitarian programmes. The European Union will address the issues of refugee return, winterization and reconstruction, within a plan of action, on the basis of the assessment by the Belgrade and Geneva working groups on humanitarian issues.

The European Union will consider ways in which it can contribute, under the right conditions, to implementing confidence-building measures among the various communities in Kosovo and to further civil-society-building, including community support for the implementation of the Education Agreement.

The Council has invited the Commission and competent Council bodies to prepare further proposals within this comprehensive approach, for early presentation to the General Affairs Council.